

If you recollect, my dears, the other day you shewed me a swallow's nest that had fallen down the chimney: for, you know, swallows frequently build in chimnies. In that nest was neither wood, hay, nor bandage; for the swallow makes use only of a kind of cement. She has no pail to hold her water, no wheel-barrow (like Master Billy's) to carry off her sand, nor shovel to mix her mortar: she flies backwards and forwards, wets her breast in the surface of some neighbouring water, then shakes the dew off upon the dust, tempers them well together, and at last works them up with her bill.

When the hen has thus completed her nest, she then lays her eggs, and the dam and male sit upon them by turns, though the hen performs the principal part of that office, and the male twitters to her to amuse her. He flies about from place to place, and every delicate morsel he can pick up, he brings to her.

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In short, his care and attention to ease the confinement of his mate is wonderful, and we are at a loss which we shall most admire, the patience of the hen in sitting so long, twenty days, or the male for his assiduity and attention.

I cannot here help mentioning to you one instance, my little dears, of the goodness and bounty of our Maker. Such birds as are either destructive to us, or for which we have little or no occasion, are those which encrease and multiply the least; while, on the other hand, those whose flesh is most wholesome, and whose eggs are most nourishing, are exceedingly plentiful: the hen alone is a little treasure.

Nature has also shaped different birds, according to the different manner in which they are to get their living. The wood-pecker has a bill of a very considerable length, and very solid and substantial, with short legs; because he principally subsists on worms, or other such